

SAT 25TH FEB 78 v TILBURY (1L) HOME LOST 0-2

WYCOMBE'S HOMECOMING TURNS SOUR

Wycombe Wanderers 0, Tilbury 2

WYCOMBE WANDERERS' first Isthmian League match at home since December was not the winning release from weeks of football starvation that Blues' supporters had expected.

Tilbury, from the lower reaches of the division, came to Loakes Park having already lost to Wycombe at home in October, and gratefully accepted two gift goals and three League points.

The fact that the Blues had ninety per cent of the possession during the game, and spent three-quarters of the entire match in the Tilbury half without finding the net, underlined further an inability to score goals that has dogged this side recently.

The pattern of solid Wycombe pressure was set as early as the first five-minute period. First, Graham McKenzie shot just over, and then Tony Horseman forced Tony Armstrong to save well. But as early as this stage, it was the visitors that looked sharper in attack on those few occasions when they did work their way into the Wanderers' half.

From a corner on the right, Gerry Sullivan fired inches over the bar, and a minute later Malcolm Linton forced Spittle to make two attempts to save a vicious effort that never left the ground in twenty yards.

Hopeful

For the whole of the remainder of the first half Tilbury managed to reach Spittle only twice. Linton put a hopeful long-range shot a yard over, and Steve Coventry fired a strong header straight at the goalkeeper after some solid work down the right by Sullivan.

At the other end, the Blues' strikers gave Armstrong plenty to do. But the Tilbury keeper had a fine game throughout, although much of his work was 'mopping-up' behind a thoroughly solid defence that often managed to blunt the sharpness of the Blues' attacks before any great danger developed.

Martin Binks, wearing the No. 11 shirt, but playing in the heart of the Tilbury back four, Linton, Neil Partner and Edward Marjoram were determined to block the way to Armstrong.

But one or two shots did get through from Wycombe. On 16 minutes, a magnificent run down the left by Micky Holifield that beat Partner for sheer speed, and brought the crowd to its feet in the process came to nothing, but after 20 minutes, the best effort of the half came from Howard Kennedy. A very hard and low shot for once left Armstrong beaten, and only narrowly went wide of his left upright.

McKenzie put another over the bar, and John Priestley from 20 yards out was only just off target. A move in which Kennedy, Holifield and Horseman worked well together left Keith Mead with a shot that

The half closed with Wycombe still trying but failing to find the net, with Linton and Sullivan denying clear-cut attacks, and Coventry and Sharpe just beginning to look dangerous on the break.

The second-half opened with resumed Wycombe pressure, but with only 3 minutes gone, Tilbury accepted their first gift goal.

Partner crossed from the right — a fairly gentle cross at knee height along the six-yard line. Mead, who either side of this one incident had a fine game, missed an attempted back-pass to Spittle, and Sharpe, standing clear on the left tapped in with the Wycombe goalkeeper still on his line.

Yet again, the Blues pressure resumed, with Holifield running

well and working hard down the left. Bobby Davies and Horseman both went close after good crosses.

After 53 minutes, Tilbury scored again, from a further error in the Wycombe defence. Binks, from well inside his own half, sent a long high ball into the home penalty area. Alan Phillips had it covered in the air, but Spittle's call of 'leave it' was plain to hear. Phillips moved aside, leaving the ball to bounce hard and high in front of his keeper. Big Steve Coventry got up well to head over Spittle's outstretched hands.

After an hour, Derek Harris replaced Dylan Evans, who had been sadly out of touch, but although the Wanderers' attacks were stepped up even further, the finishing touch was missing. Apart from the two goals,

Spittle was never troubled in the second-half, and had no shot of any power to save, so complete was the Blues' possession. But that possession was not turned into goals and seldom looked as if it would be. Too many weak efforts in front of goal, and a big, strong defence the forwards never mastered, made Tilbury's task easier than it looked.

The Wanderers' attack is in a sad state these days, and the lack of finishing power more than any other factor, has given Wycombe its poorest week of the season so far.

Wycombe: P. Spittle, P. Birdseye, B. Davies, K. Mead, A. Phillips, J. Priestley, S. McKenzie, M. Holifield, A. Horseman, H. Kennedy, D. Evans (D. Harris 60 mins.).

Tilbury: T. Armstrong, N. Partner, E. Marjoram, G. Sullivan, D. Barnett, M. Linton, S. Coventry, N. Smith, T. Sharpe, J. Hatton, M. Binks.

... THE GOALS THAT GOT AWAY



Above: A close shot by Howard Kennedy beats Tilbury goalkeeper Tony Armstrong only to skim past the outside of the post. Below: Another promising Wycombe move breaks down as Armstrong claims a high ball in the area.



Confident Maidenhead

WYCOMBE Wanderers will be aiming to put Saturday's disastrous defeat behind them when they entertain Maidenhead United tonight (Tuesday) in the second round of the Hitachi Isthmian League Cup.

Tilbury's 2-0 win on Saturday was nothing short of a tragedy for the Blues who needed an impressive performance in their first match at home since December 10. Tonight's game at Loakes Park is a good opportunity to make up for the disappointment.

Manager John Reardon is likely to make one change in switching Dylan Evans for Derek Harris. Evans had a poor game against Tilbury and when he was eventually replaced by Harris, Wycombe showed a better understanding up front.

Maidenhead come to Loakes Park full of confidence after a string of excellent results in Division One of the league where they are currently placed eighth. The latest result was a 2-2 draw at Ilford.

Since they last met Wanderers on November 19 in the Berks and Bucks Senior Cup, they have lost only a couple of times and are currently unbeaten in their last 11 league and cup games.

Former Wycombe winger Geoff Anthony is now manager of the 'Magpies' and Geoff is expected to line up in midfield

against his old team-mates. Another ex-Wanderer Billy Roberts, who left Wycombe three months ago, will play alongside him.

So far Maidenhead have played four games in the League Cup. They won 2-1 at Walton and Hershaw and then drew 2-2 at Chesham. They won the replay 4-1. Premier Division strugglers Southall fell in the last round, going down 1-0 at York Road.

Tomorrow night (Wednesday), Wanderers will be in action again when they meet Detroit Express, a new club which will play in the North American Soccer League next season. Managed by former Watford and Sheffield United boss Ken Furphy, Detroit are staying at Bisham Abbey in Marlow this week and have already played friendlies against some professional clubs. These games, however, have all been behind 'closed doors' and the game tomorrow will be Detroit's first in public.

Among the better known players in their side are Leicester and Fulham striker Steve Earle and Graham Oates, the Newcastle defender.